

Spiritan Magazine

Volume 33
Number 2 *Summer*

Article 8

Summer 2009

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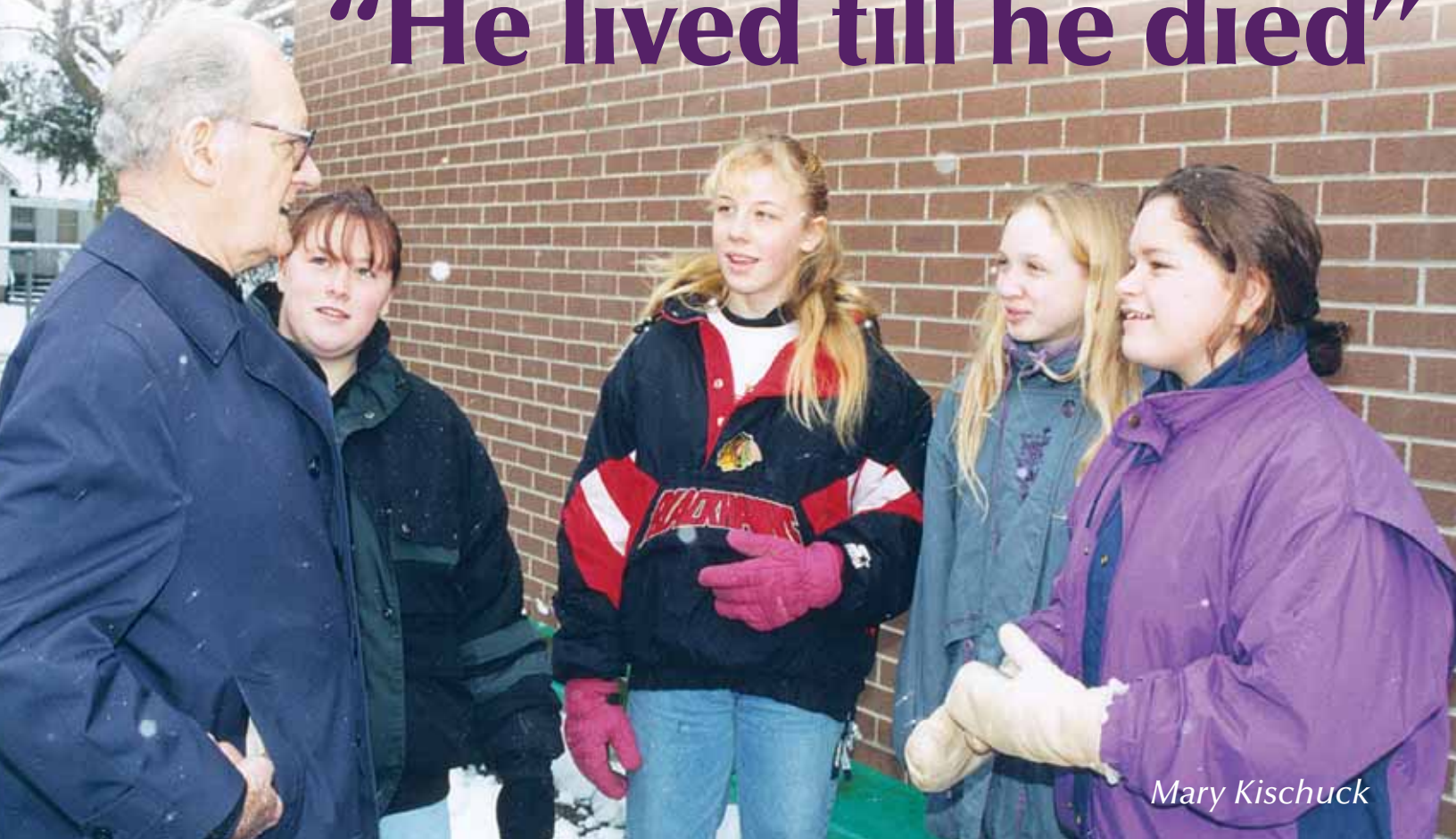
Recommended Citation

(2009). Fr. Hudson Remembered: "He lived till he died". *Spiritan Magazine*, 33 (2). Retrieved from <https://dsc.duq.edu/spiritan-tc/vol33/iss2/8>

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Father Hudson Remembered

“He lived till he died”



Mary Kischuck

“We love you, Father, we’re praying for you, and we wish you a peaceful night and a restful sleep.” Those were the last words spoken over the telephone to our beloved pastor.

He couldn’t speak, but uttered a guttural sound, and we are content that he heard our prayer for him. He died the following morning, March 5, 2009 at 4:20 a.m.

It was 1973 when our association with the Spiritans began. We had just moved to Port Elgin, my husband John and I and our four children, and were parishioners at St. Joseph’s Church. Father Martin Brennan CSSp was the pastor and Father John Sheehy CSSp was his assistant. We were asked if we would consider cleaning the Church as a family. We consented — and that led to a twenty-nine year connection for which we will always be grateful to God.

Father Hudson came to the parish in September 1978. He had never been a pastor before. His work had been in Mis-

sions and Retreats. He really had no pattern to follow, but he used his initiative and great drive and dug in with both heels. By this time I had been working as the Parish Secretary for some years.

The Children of the Eucharist

He loved children and saw the wisdom of incorporating them into the liturgy of the Mass. Thus began a programme that would encompass little ones from the age of two and a half through to young adults. The Children of the Eucharist included the young ones in the Mass. It piqued their interest and they felt very much part of the

celebration. Their inclusion meant a lot to them, and they never forgot it. They served at the Altar; rang the bells at the Consecration; read the Word of God and the Petitions; brought up the Gifts — and the littlest ones brought up small baskets of flowers for the side altars. It not only led some parents back to Mass, but grandparents and others as well. “Suffer the little children ...”

The youth of the parish reaped untold benefits when Father, with his trusty Youth Leaders, took them on several World Youth Day trips. He will be forever in their hearts.

Second chance for ‘boat people’

His deep concern for the ‘boat people’ in the late 70s led him to have the parish sponsor two large families from Laos. We arranged all their citizenship papers, health care, etc. They settled in, got jobs and the children attended St. Joseph’s School. In time, some left to live in Toronto, while others remained here. At the Vigil Service for Father Hudson, several of them attended and we enjoyed a very happy reunion.

They told us how grateful they all were to Father and the parishioners for their “second chance at a new and happy life in Canada.” They also attended the interment at Holy Cross Cemetery.

Dr. Simone’s “Canadian Food for Children” was especially close to Father’s heart, and the parish to this day supports his apostolate. Some time after he left the parish, Father accompanied Dr. Simone to Africa and was a witness to the success of his aid distribution process.

Visionary imagination

Father had remarkable plans for the parish. His imagination was visionary when it came to additions, alterations, etc. to the churches.

He first of all built a choir loft at St. Joseph’s. It not only provided a haven for the choir, but also added extra seating which was needed. The addition and extension at St. Patrick’s Church, Southampton, was masterfully and beautifully completed, and it also provided room for more seating. The building of Jubilee Hall, completed in 1995, has provided the parish with a beautiful edifice in which to celebrate, meet and congregate.

Hospitality

Father’s hospitality is legend. His door was open to all, especially those in need. He was always available when someone was in trouble to help them through the dark time, and when he visited the Hospital or Nursing Home he said a kind word to all. The townspeople greeted him warmly whenever he went out, and he had very close and treasured friends from every denomination.

Getting the right words

As his secretary for 24 years, I witnessed Father’s unfailing thoughtfulness and consideration. It was a privilege to assist him in any way I could in his day-to-day dealings with people.

Taking dictation, however, from Father when he was composing a statement for the Bulletin, or an official letter, was another matter. He was intensely concerned to get exactly the right words — and much time was spent on revisions. No one ever spent as much energy and thought mulling over a reference letter. But he had the uncanny ability to dig deep inside and pinpoint exactly the person’s gifts which he knew would be an asset to their employer.

It was a ‘labour of love’ for the secretary.

Father returned to Laval House in July 2002, and the parish was given over to the care of Diocesan Priests. My retirement followed shortly after.

During Father’s last months his real mettle came through. He suffered his ill-

ness with patience, fortitude and acceptance of God’s will. He didn’t give in easily: he lived till he died.

Our family will miss him forever, and we thank God for bringing this holy and humble priest into our lives. May his soul rest in peace! ■

Looking back

After ordination in 1946 I was given a position on the Spiritan team whose purpose was to recruit vocations in Ireland. We visited boys’ Secondary Schools to talk about our missions overseas and to invite young men to consider the missionary vocation. We kept in touch with everyone who expressed interest, gathering them together for retreats, bringing them to Spiritan communities to meet retired missionaries. I loved this work very much and many of the Spiritans I now live with were recruited by me in the classrooms of Ireland.

In my first twenty years in Canada I travelled the country from East to West. I gave talks, retreats and workshops in high schools, colleges and universities, in monasteries, convents and parishes. I never turned down an opportunity to spread awareness of the Spiritans in this new found land.

I discovered how glorious it was. I felt very fulfilled. The Spiritan group was growing as more priests were sent from Ireland. The civil war in Nigeria brought an influx of displaced missionaries. Vocations were coming in numbers from the graduates of Neil McNeil High School. A seminary was set up. My work appeared very necessary and successful.

Ten difficult years

Then the great sea change took place. The young embraced the new philosophy and life-style of the 60s. The turmoil caused by Vatican II affected both laity and clergy. As I saw the stream of vocations dry up and our seminary closed, I began to question the purpose of my work. This was the beginning of ten most difficult years for me.

During these years I was based in the Mount Cenacle Retreat Centre in Hamilton. My retreats were given mostly to older Catholics — the younger church members seemed to turn away from missions, retreats, communion breakfasts, sodalities etc. which were the bread and butter of my ministry. The support of the sisters in Mount Cenacle and of the pious, if aging, people who continued to do an annual retreat sustained me through this era of my life... In 1978 I accepted the post as Pastor of St. Joseph’s in Port Elgin.

Needless to say, it was with great regret that health and age factors caused me to retire at the age of 82. I am happy and fulfilled in my ministry at Laval House looking after my Spiritan brothers who are dependent because of age and infirmity. And I thank God for all the gifts and graces he has given me, for my fellow Spiritans, for my friends and for giving me (over) fifty years in a wonderful country, Canada.

— Excerpted from an article in *Spiritan*, May 2004.

